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OFFICE OF CHIEF OF COUNSEL FOR WAR CRIMES

EVIDENCE DIVISION

Date : 22 July 1948

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Fred Niebergall

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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Nuremberg, 9 July 1948

Paul Joosten

PAUL A. JOOSTEN

General Secretary
International Military
Tribunal

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City of Washington)
) ss
District of Columbia)

Bruno Bettelheim being first duly sworn deposes and says:

1. I was born in Vienna, Austria and lived there up until the annexation of Austria by the Germans in March, 1938. My education was obtained at the Progressive-Real-Gymnasium at Vienna and the University of Vienna where I received a Ph. D. degree in psychology and philosophy in 1938. For a period of approximately twelve years prior thereto I had conducted research work in psychology and education. I was also interested in a business which I inherited from my father. This business, a joint stock company by the name of Bettelheim and Schnitzer, was engaged in lumber and saw mill operations in Austria.

2. My political affiliations were with the Social Democratic Party which stood for the independence of Austria. The tenets of this party were diametrically opposed to the Nazi viewpoint and principles.

3. Immediately following the occupation of Austria on or about March 12, 1938, it became apparent to me that I would not be permitted to live in peace in Austria. Therefore, I resolved to leave the country. My wife and I left Vienna on about 12 or 13 of March and were stopped at the Czechoslovakian-Hungarian border that night. The next day we undertook to leave Vienna by train and, while my wife was permitted to proceed, I was detained by the police, ordered to remain in Vienna, and my passport taken away from me. Within the next day or two the police searched my home. I was extensively questioned but not taken into custody, the police stating that it did not appear that I had violated any of the laws of Austria. Three or four weeks later I was taken into custody by the Austrian police and for three days questioned about my political activities. At the conclusion of the questioning the police officer who was in charge of the investigation dictated a statement to the effect that there appeared to be no basis whatever for any legal action against me. Thereupon I was released. Two weeks later I was taken into custody and imprisoned. It was stated to me that my confinement was the result of orders issued by the Gestapo in Berlin. I spent three days in jail in Vienna after which I was transferred to the concentration camp at Dachau early in May, 1938. I spent approximately four months in Dachau after which I was transferred to the concentration camp at Buchenwald. Meanwhile my wife had proceeded to the United States. I was released from Buchenwald in April 1939. My

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release was effected through the aid of some influential friends of mine in America who were able to enlist the assistance of the State Department of the United States.

4. Upon my release I came to the United States. In November, 1939 I was appointed Research Associate of the Progressive Education Association at the University of Chicago. Since then I have been connected with this University. At present I am Assistant Professor of Education and Principal of the University's Orthogenic School.

5. My period of confinement in the concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald afforded an opportunity to conduct investigations, collect data, and make certain observations concerning the effect on the personality and behavior of individuals who have spent several years in such institutions. The motives which prompted me to make such a study are adverted to below. It is not the purpose of this statement to recount once more the horror story of the German concentration camp. That story has been repeatedly and adequately documented, particularly in recent months following the fall of Germany. Accordingly, this statement does not emphasize individual acts of terror but is limited to the sociological significance of the concentration camp; viz., an examination and appraisal of the concentration camp as a means of producing psychological changes in the prisoners. On the basis of my previous experence with Gestapo methods and my observation of the deteriorating changes which occurred in the prisoners during the process of their adaptation to the camp situation I was enabled to reach certain conclusions as to the results which the Gestapo sought to achieve by means of the camps. These conclusions are stated below.

6. In the concentration camp the Gestapo developed methods for subjecting not only free men, but also the most ardent foes of the Nazi system, to a process of disintegration from their position as autonomous individuals. This process was attained by means of exposing them to extreme experiences. During the course of my confinement my study of this subject embraced an investigation and examination of what occurred in the prisoners from the moment they had their first experience with the Gestapo up to the time when the process of adaptation to the camp situation was practically concluded.

7. Reasons for making studies. While my former training and pshychological interests were of material assistance to me in collecting the data and conducting the necessary investigations I did not analyze my own behavior and that of my fellow prisoners in order to add to pure scientific

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research. On the contrary, the study of these behaviors was a mechanism developed by me in order that I might have some intellectual interests and in this way be better equipped to endure life in the camp. It was developed by me to forestall a complete disintegration of my character and personality. I may add that I felt that without an activity which would force me to remain continuously critical of the Gestapo methods I would not be able to defend successfully the integrity of my personality against the impact of the Gestapo methods. The need for a strong defense against the influence which the camp was exercising on me became apparent during my first few days of confinement. I observed that I was behaving differently from the way I used to. I may add that I am convinced that I would have been unable to make these observations without the strict and continuous self-observation which my years of psycho-analytical training taught me.

8. I observed that some of my actions evidenced pscho-pathological behavior. Thereupon the question arose in my mind as to whether or not I was progressing into insanity. Moreover I observed my fellow prisoners act in a most peculiar way although I had every reason to assume that they, too, had been normal persons before being imprisoned. To ascertain the nature of my own observations and to protect myself from the apparent disintegration manifested by the other prisoners obviously became a matter of prime importance to me. The answer was comparatively simple: to find out what happened in them and to me. If I did not change any more than all other normal persons, then what happened in me and to me was a process of adaptation and not the setting in of insanity. By undertaking this analysis I not only erected a bulwark against personality disintegration but I also succeeded in killing time in a way which seemed constructive. To forget for a time that I was in the camp seemed at first the greatest advantage of this occupation. As time went on, the enhancement of my self-respect due to my ability to continue to do meaningful work despite the contrary efforts of the Gestapo became of first importance.

9. Methods of collecting data. It was impossible to keep any records, because there was no time for them, no place to keep them and no way to take them out of the camp. This difficulty was overcome by making an effort to commit to memory the essential facts. While this procedure was handicapped by extreme malnutrition, the improvement in my health following termination of confinement in camp was accompanied by the recollection of much seemingly forgotten material.

10. The prisoners were willing to talk about themselves because to find somebody interested in them and their problems added to their self-esteem

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While conversation at work was strictly prohibited, during the hours of early morning and late evening, the guards could not see whether or not the prisoners talked. This afforded an opportunity of one or two hours per day which was available for conversation.

11. I worked in at least 20 different labor groups whose number varied from 20 or 30 all the way up to a few hundreds. I slept in five different barracks in each of which 200 or 300 prisoners lived. In this way I came to know personally at least 600 prisoners at Dachau (out of approximately 6,000) and at least 900 at Buchenwald (out of approximately 8,000). Although older prisoners of the same category lived together in barracks, all categories were mixed at work so that I was able to contact and interview prisoners of all types. The main different categories were: political prisoners; "work-shy" prisoners, that is, persons who did not agree to work wherever the government wanted them to work, or who had changed working places to get higher wages, etc.; former members of the French Foreign Legion and spies; Jehovah's Witnesses and other conscientious objectors; Jews; criminals; and other groups, e.g. former members of such suppressed Nazi groups as the followers of Roehm who were still alive.

12. I was thus afforded an opportunity of interviewing all different groups and in this way secured an adequate sampling. I was able to find only two other persons whose intelligence and training qualified them to participate in my investigation. These individuals spoke to several hundred prisoners. Every day during the morning count of the prisoners, while waiting for assignment to later groups, reports were exchanged, and theories discussed. These talks proved very helpful in clarifying mistakes due to taking a one-sided viewpoint.

13. The process of adaptation to the camp situation can be broken down into three different stages. The main event of the first stage is the transportation to the camp and the first experiences in it. The next stage is characterized by a slow process of changing the prisoner's life and personality. It occurs step by step continuously. The last stage is the final adaptation to the camp situation. These three stages will be analyzed below.

14. <u>The transportation into the camp and the first experiences in it</u>. After having spent several days in prison, the prisoners were brought into the camp. During this transportation they were exposed to constant tortures of various kinds. Corporal punishment, consisting of whipping, kicking,

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slapping, intermingled with shooting and wounding with the bayonet, alternated with tortures the obvious goal of which was extreme exhaustion. For instance, the prisoners were forced to stare for hours into glaring lights, to kneel for hours, and so on. From time to time a prisoner got killed; no prisoner was permitted to take care of his or another's wounds. These tortures alternated with efforts on the part of the guards to force the prisoners to hit one another, and to defile what the guards considered the prisoners' most cherished values. For instance, the prisoners were forced to curse their God, to accuse themselves of vile actions, accuse their wives of adultery and of prostitution. This continued for hours and was repeated at various times.

15. The purpose of the tortures was to break the resistance of the prisoners, and to assure the guards that they were really superior to them. This can be seen from the fact that the longer the tortures lasted, the less violent they became. The guards became slowly less excited, and at the end even talked with the prisoners. As soon as a new guard took over, he started with new acts of terror, although not as violent as in the beginning, and he eased up sooner than his predecessor. Sometimes prisoners who had already spent time in camp were brought back with a group of new prisoners. These old prisoners were not tortured if they could furnish evidence that they had already been in the camp. That these tortures were planned can be seen from the fact that during my transportation into the camp after several prisoners had died and many had been wounded in tortures lasting for 12 hours, the command, "Stop mistreating the prisoners," came and from this moment on the prisoners were left in peace till they arrived in the camp when another group of guards took over and started anew to take advantage of them.

16. Most of the prisoners became so exhausted that they were only partly conscious of what happened. In general, prisoners remembered the details and did not mind talking about them, but they did not like to talk about what they had felt and thought during the time of torture. The few who volunteered information made vague statements which sounded like devious rationalizations, invented for the purpose of justifying that they had endured treatment injurious to their self-respect without trying to fight back. The few who had tried to fight back could not be interviewed; they were dead.

17. I can vividly recall my extreme weariness, resulting from a bayonet wound which I had received early in the course of transportation

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and from a heavy blow on the head. Both injuries led to the loss of a considerable amount of blood, and made me groggy. Nevertheless I wondered that the guards really tortured prisoners in the way it had been described in books on the concentration camps; that the Gestapo was so simple-minded as either to enjoy forcing prisoners to defile themselves or to expect to break their resistance in this way. I wondered that the guards were lacking in fantasy when selecting the means to torture the prisoners; that their sadism was without imagination. I was rather amused by the repeated statement that guards do not shoot the prisoners but kill them by beating them to death because a bullet costs six pfennigs, and the prisoners are not worth even so much. Obviously the idea that these men, most of them formerly influential persons, were not worth such a trifle impressed the guards considerably. It was clear that these tortures followed a deliberate and purposeful plan. This is evidenced by the fact that the railroad coaches in which prisoners were transported were equipped with unusually strong light bulbs. The prisoners were forced to stare for hours at these lights which created in them a condition analogous to a state of hypnotism. These circumstances contributed to creating a condition which may best be described as a state of "depersonalization." It seemed as if I had become convinced that these horrible and degrading experiences somehow did not happen to "me" as a subject but to "me" as an object. This experience was corroborated by the statements of other prisoners.

18. All the thoughts and emotions which I had during the transportation were extremely detached. It was as if I watched things happening in which I only vaguely participated. Later I learned that many prisoners had developed this same feeling of detachment, as if what happened really did not matter to oneself. It was strangely mixed with a conviction that "this cannot be true, such things just do not happen." Not only during the transportation but all through the time spent in camp, the prisoners had to convince themselves that this was real, was really happening, and not just a nightmare. They were never wholly successful.

19. There were good indications that most guards embraced a similar attitude, although for different reasons. They tortured the prisoners partly because they enjoyed demonstrating their superiority, partly because their superiors expected it of them. But, having been educated in a world which rejected brutality, they felt uneasy about what they were doing. It seems that they, too, had an emotional attitude toward their acts of brutality

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which might be described as a feeling of unreality. After having been guards in the camp for some time, they got accustomed to inhuman behavior, they became "conditioned" to it; it then became part of their "real" life.

20. To summarize: During the transportation the prisoners were exposed to physical and mental tortures, the purpose of which seemed to be to break any ability to resist the Gestapo. They seemed, moreover, to serve the purpose of overcoming the Gestapo members' fear of the prisoners who were more intelligent and belonged usually to a higher social group. During the transportation the prisoners developed a state of detachment, feeling as if what happened did not really happen to them as persons. Thus, transportation into the camp was instrumental in bringing about the alienation of the prisoner from his normal personality.

21. It seems that camp experiences which remained within the normal frame of reference of a prisoner's life experience were dealt with by means of the normal psychological mechanisms. Once the experience transcended this frame of reference, the normal mechanisms seemed no longer able to deal adequately with it and new psychological mechanisms were needed. The experience during the transportation was one of those transcending the normal frame of reference and the reaction to it may be described as "unforgetable, but unreal."

22. Attitudes similar to those developed toward the transportation could be observed in other extreme situations. On a terribly cold winter night when a snow storm was blowing, all prisoners were punished by being forced to stand at attention without overcoats--they never wore any--for hours. This, after having worked for more than 12 hours in the open, and having received hardly any food. The reason for this punishment was that two prisoners had tried to escape. On such occasions all prisoners were always punished very severely, so that in the future they would give away secrets they had learned, because otherwise they would have to suffer. The idea was that every prisoner ought to feel responsible for any act committed by any other prisoner. This was in line with the principle of the Gestapo to force the prisoners to feel and act as a group, and not as individuals. They were threatened with having to stand all through the night. After about 20 prisoners had died from exposure the discipline broke down. The threats of the guards became ineffective. To be exposed to the weather was a terrible torture; to see one's friends die without being able to help, and to stand a good chance of dying, created a situation similar to the transportation, except that the prisoners had by now more experience with

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the Gestapo. Open resistance was impossible, as impossible as it was to do anything definite to safeguard oneself. A feeling of utter indifference swept the prisoners. They did not care whether the guards shot them; they were indifferent to acts of torture committed by the guards. The guards had no longer any authority, the spell of fear and death was broken. It was again as if what happened did not "really" happen to oneself. There was again the split between the "me" to whom it happened, and the "me" who really did not care and was just an interested but detached observer. Unfortunate as the situation was, they felt free from fear and therefore were actually happier than at most other times during their camp experiences.

23. After more than 80 prisoners had died, and several hundred had their extremities so badly frozen that they had later to be amputated, the prisoners were permitted to return to the barracks. They were completely exhausted, but did not experience that feeling of happiness which some of them had expected. They felt relieved that the torture was over, but felt at the same time that they no longer were free from fear and no longer could strongly rely on mutual help. Each prisoner as an individual was now comparatively safer, but he had lost the safety originating in being a member of a unified group. This event was again freely discussed, in a detached way, and again the discussion was restricted to facts; the prisoners' emotions and thoughts during this night were hardly ever mentioned. The event itself and its details were not forgotten, but no particular emotions were attached to them; nor did they appear in dreams.

24. The psychological reactions to events which were somewhat more within the sphere of the normally comprehensible were decidedly different from those to extreme events. It seems that prisoners dealt with less extreme events in the same way as if they had happened outside of the camp. For example, if a prisoner's punishment was not of an unusual kind, he seemed ashamed of it, he tried not to speak about it. A slap in one's face was embarrassing, and not to be discussed. One hated individual guards who had kicked one, or slapped one, or verbally abused one much more than the guard who really had wounded one seriously. In the latter case one eventually hated the Gestapo as such, but not so much the individual inflicting the punishment. Obviously this differentiation was unreasonable, but it seemed to be inescapable. One felt deeper and more violent aggressions against particular Gestapo members who had committed minor vile acts than one felt against those who had acted in a much more terrible fasion.

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25. It seems that all experiences which might have happened during the prisoner's "normal" life history provoked a "normal" reaction. Prisoners seemed, for instance, particularly sensitive to punishments similar to those which a parent might inflict on his child. To punish a child was within their "normal" frame of reference, but that they should become the object of the punishment destroyed their adult frame of reference. So they reacted to it not in an adult, but in a childish way--with embarrassment and shame, with violent, impotent, and unmanageable emotions directed, not against the system, but against the person inflicting the punishment.

26. Resentment by prisoners of minor vile acts on the part of the guards more than extreme experiences is explained as follows: When a prisoner was cursed, slapped, pushed around "like a child" and if he was, like a child, unable to defend himself, this revived in him behavior patterns and psychological mechanisms which he had developed when a child. Like a child he was unable to see his treatment in the general context of the behavior of the Gestapo. The degradation of the prisoner by means of being treated like a child took place not only in his mind, but in the minds of his fellow prisoners, too.

Differences in attitudes of Old and New Prisoners.

27. As time went on the difference in the reaction to minor and major sufferings slowly seemed to disappear. This change in reaction was only one of many differences between old and new prisoners. A few others ought to be mentioned. In the following discussion I refer by the term "new prisoners" to those who had not spent more than one year in the camp; "old" prisoners are those who have spent at least three years in the camp.

28. The main concern of the new prisoners seemed to be to remain intact as a personality and to return to the outer world the same persons who had left it; all their emotional efforts were directed towards this goal. Old prisoners seemed mainly concerned with the problem of how to live as well as possible within the camp. Once they had reached this attitude, everything that happened to them, even the worst atrocity, was "real" to them. No longer was there a split between one to whom things happened and the one who observed them. Once this stage was reached of taking everything that happened in the camp as "real," there was every indication that the prisoners who had reached it were afraid of returning to the outer world. They did not admit it directly, but from their talk it was clear that they hardly believed they would ever return to this outer world because they felt that only a cataclysmic event--a world war and world revolution--could free them; and even then they doubted that they would be able to adapt to this new life. They seemed aware of what had

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happened to them while growing older in the camp. They realized that they had adapted themselves to the life in the camp and that this process was coexistent with a basic change in their personality.

29. The most drastic demonstration of this realization was provided by the case of a formerly very prominent radical German politician. He declared that according to his experience nobody could live in the camp longer than five years without changing his attitudes so radically that he no longer could be considered the same person he used to be. He asserted that he did not see any point in continuing to live once his real life consisted in being a prisoner in a concentration camp, that he could not endure developing those attitudes and behaviors he saw developing in all old prisoners. He therefore had decided to commit suicide on the sixth anniversary of his being brought into the camp. His fellow prisoners tried to watch him carefully on this day, but nevertheless he succeeded.

30. There was, of course, considerable variation among individuals in the time it took them to make their peace with the idea of having to spend the rest of their lives in the camp. Some became part of the camp life rather soon, some probably never. The change to accepting camp life as real never took place before spending two years in camp. Even then everyone was overtly longing to regain freedom. Some of the indications from which I could observe the changed attitude were: scheming to find oneself a better place in the camp rather than trying to contact the outer world, avoiding speculation about one's family, or world affairs, concentrating all interest on events taking place inside of the camp. It so happened that on the same day news was received of a speech by President Roosevelt, denouncing Hitler and Germany, and rumors spread that one officer of the Gestapo would be replaced by another. The new prisoners discussed the speech excitedly, and paid no attention to the rumors, the old prisoners paid no attention to the speech, but devoted all their conversations to the changes in camp officers. When I expressed to some of the old prisoners my astonishment that they seemed not to be interested in discussing their future life outside the camp, they frequently admitted that they no longer could visualize themselves living outside the camp, making free decisions, taking care of themselves and their families. The changes in attitudes toward their families and to events taking place in the outside world were not the only ones which could be observed in old prisoners; other differences between old and new prisoners could be recognized in their hopes for their future lives, in the degree to which they regressed

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to infantile behavior, and in many other ways. When discussing these differences between old and new prisoners I wish to make clear that there were great individual variations, that all statements are generalizations based on my observation of and discussion with the individuals.

31. The new prisoners consistently accused their families of betraying and cheating them. They would weep over a letter telling of the efforts to liberate them, but curse in the next moment when learning that some of their property had been sold without their permission. They would swear at their families which "obviously" considered them "already dead." Even the smallest change in their former private world attained tremendous importance.

32. The violent reaction against changes in their families was the counterpart of the prisoners' realization that they were changing. What enraged them was probably not only the fact of the change, but the change in standing within the family which it implied. Their families had been dependent on them for decisions, and now they were the ones to be dependent. That created in them a feeling of dependency. The only chance they saw for becoming again the head of the family was that the family structure remain untouched despite their absence. Also they knew the attitudes of most persons toward those who have spent time in prisons of any kind.

33. Old prisoners did not like to be reminded of their families and former friends. When they spoke about them, it was in a very detached way. They liked to receive letters, but it was not very important to them. It has been mentioned that they had some realization of how difficult it might be for them to find their way back, but there was another contributing factor, namely, the prisoners' hatred of all those living outside of the camp, who "enjoyed life as if we were not rotting away."

34. This outside world which continued to live as if nothing had happened was in the minds of the prisoners represented by those whom they used to know, namely, by their relatives and friends. But even this hatred was very subdued in the old prisoners. It seemed that, as much as they had forgotten to love their kin, they had lost the ability to hate them. They had learned to direct a great amount of aggression against themselves so as not to get into too many conflicts with the Gestapo, while the new prisoners still directed their aggressions against the outer world, and--when not supervised--against the Gestapo. Since the old prisoners did not show much emotion either way, they were unable to feel strongly about anybody.

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35. Old prisoners did not like to mention their former social status or their former activities, whereas new prisoners were rather boastful about them. New prisoners seemed to try to back their self-esteem by letting others know how important they had been, with the very obvious implication that they still were important. Old prisoners seemed to have accepted their state of dejection, and to compare it with their former splendor--and anything was magnificent when compared with the situation in which they found themsleves--was probably too depressing.

36. Closely connected with the prisoners' beliefs about, and attitudes toward, their families were their beliefs and hopes concerning their life after release from camp. Here the prisoners embarked a great deal on individual and group daydreams. There was a marked difference between the daydreams of the new and the old prisoners. The longer the time a prisoner had spent in camp, the less true to reality were his daydreams. They were convinced that they would emerge as the future leaders of Germany at least, if not of the world. This was the least to which their sufferings entitled them. These grandiose expectations were coexistent with great vagueness as to their future private lives. In their daydreams they were certain to emerge as the future secretaries of state, but they were less certain whether they would continue to live with their wives and children. Part of these daydreams may be explained by the fact that they seemed to feel that only a high public position could help them to regain their standing within their families.

37. The hopes and expectations of the new prisoners about their future lives were much more true to reality. Despite their open ambivalence about their families, they never doubted that they were going to continue to live with them just where they had left off. They hoped to continue their public and professional lives in the same way as they used to live them.

38. Most of the adaptations to the camp situation mentioned so far were more or less individual. The changes discussed below, namely, the <u>regression to infantile behavior</u>, was a mass phenomenon. Whereas the prisoners did not interfere with another's daydreams or with his attitudes to his family, they asserted their power as a group over those prisoners who objected to deviations from normal adult behavior. They accused those who would not develop a child-like dependency on the guards as threatening the security of the group, an accusation which was not without foundation, since the Gestapo always punished the group for the misbehavior of indifidual

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members. This regression into childlike behavior was, therefore, even more inescapable than other types of behavior imposed on the individual by the impact of the conditions in the camp.

39. The prisoners developed types of behavior which are characteristic of infancy or early youth. Some of these behaviors developed slowly, others were immediately imposed on the prisoners and developed only in intensity as time went on. Some of these more or less infantile behaviors have already been discussed, such as ambivalence to one's family, despondency, finding satisfaction in irrealistic daydreaming rather than in action.

40. I am convinced that these behavior patterns were deliberately produced by the Gestapo. I mentioned that during the transportation the prisoners were tortured in a way in which a cruel and domineering father might torture a helpless child; here I should add that the prisoners were also debased by techniques which went much further into childhood situations. They were forced to soil themselves. In the camp the defecation was strictly regulated; it was one of the most important daily events, discussed in great detail. During the day the prisoners who wanted to defecate had to obtain the permission of the guard. It seemed as if the education to cleanliness would be once more repeated. It seemed to give pleasure to the guards to hold the power of granting or withholding the permission to visit the latrines. (Toilets were mostly not available.) This pleasure of the guards found its counterpart in the pleasure the prisoners derived from visting the latrines, because there they usually could rest for a moment, secure from the whips of the overseers and guards. They were not always so secure, because sometimes enterprising young guards enjoyed interfering with the prisoners even at these moments.

41. The prisoners were forced to say "thou" to one another, which in Germany is indiscriminately used only among small children. They were not permitted to address one another with the many titles to which middle- and upper-class Germans are accustomed. On the other hand, they had to address the guards in the most dferential manner, giving them all their titles.

42. The prisoners lived, like children, only in the immediate present; they lost the feeling for the sequence of time, they became unable to plan for the future or to give up immediate pleasure satisfactions to gain greater ones in the near future. They were unable to establish durable object-relations. Friendships developed as quickly as they

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broke up. Prisoners would, like early adolescents, fight one another tooth and nail, declare that they would never even look at one another or speak to one another, only to become close friends within a few minutes. They were boastful, telling tales about what they had accomplished in their former lives, or how they succeeded in cheating foremen or guards, and how they sabotaged the work. Like children they felt not at all set back or ashamed when it became known that they had lied about their prowess.

43. Another factor contributing to the regression into childhood behavior was the work the prisoners were forced to perform. New prisoners particularly were forced to perform nonsensical tasks, such as carrying heavy rocks from one place to another, and after a while back to the place where they had picked them up. On other days they were were forced to dig holes in the ground with their bare hands, although tools were available. They resented such nonsensical work, although it ought to have been immaterial to them whether their work was useful. They felt debased when forced to perform "childish" and stupid labor, and preferred even harder work when it produced something that might be considered useful. There seems to be no doubt that the tasks they performed, as well as the mistreatment by the Gestapo which they had to endure, contributed to their disintegration as adult persons.

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44. All changes produced by living in the camp seemed to force the prisoners back into childhood attitudes and behaviors and they became in this way more or less willing tools of the Gestapo.

45. <u>The final adjustment to the life in the camp</u>. A prisoner had reached the final stage of adjustment to the camp situation when he had changed his personality so as to accept as his own the values of the Gestapo. A few examples may illustrate how this acceptance expressed itself.

46. The prisoners found themselves in an impossible situation due to the steady interference with their privacy on the part of the guards and other prisoners. So a great amount of aggression accumulated. In the new prisoners it vented itself in the way it might have done in the world outside the camp. But slowly prisoners accepted, as expression of their verbal aggressions, terms which definitely did not originate in their previous vocabularies, but were taken over from the very different vocabulary of the Gestapo. From copying the verbal aggressions of the Gestapo to copying their form of bodily aggressions was one more step, but it took several years to make this step. It was not unusual to find

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old prisoners, when in charge of others, behaving worse than the Gestapo, in some cases because they were trying to win favor with the Gestapo in this way but more often because they considered this the best way to behave toward prisoners in the camp.

47. Practically all prisoners who had spent a long time in the camp took over the Gestapo's attitude toward the so-called unfit prisoners. Newcomers presented the old prisoners with difficult problems. Their complaints about the unbearable life in camp added new strain to the life in the barracks, so did their inability to adjust to it. Bad behavior in the labor gang endangered the whole group. So a newcomer who did not stand up well under the strain tended to become a liability for the other prisoners. Moreover, weaklings were those most apt eventually to turn traitors. Weaklings usually died during the first weeks in the camp anyway, so it seemed as well to get rid of them sooner. So old prisoners were sometimes instrumental in getting rid of the unfit, in this way making a feature of Gestapo ideology a feature of their own behavior. This was one of the many situations in which old prisoners demonstrated toughness and molded their way of treating other prisoners according to the example set by the Gestapo. That this was really a taking-over of Gestapo attitudes can be seen from the treatment of traitors. Self-protection asked for their elimination, but the way in which they were tortured for days and slowly killed was taken over from the Gestapo.

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48. Old prisoners who seemed to have a tendency to identify themselves with the Gestapo did so not only in respect to aggressive behavior. They would try to arrogate to themselves old pieces of Gestapo uniforms. If that was not possible, they tried to sew and mend their unifors so that they would resemble those of the guards. The length to which prisoners would go in these efforts seemed unbelievable, particularly since the Gestapo punished them for their efforts to copy Gestapo uniforms. When asked why they did it they admitted that they loved to look like one of the guards.

49. The identification with the Gestapo did not stop with the copying of their outer appearance and behavior. Old prisoners accepted their goals and values, too, even when they seemed opposed to their own interests. It was appalling to see how far formerly even politically well-educated prisoners would go in this identification. At one time American and English newspapers were full of stories about the cruelties committed in the camps. The Gestapo punished the prisoners for the appearance of

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of these stories true to their policy of punishing the group for whatever a member or a former member did, and the stories must have originated in reports of former prisoners. In discussions of this event old prisoners would insist that it is not the business of foreign correspondents or newspapers to bother with German institutions and expressed their hatred of the journalists who tried to help them. I asked more than one hundred old political prisoners the following question: "If I am lucky and reach foreign soil, should I tell the story of the camp and arouse the interest of the cultured world?" I found only two who made the unqualified statement that everyone escaping Germany ought to fight the Nazis to the best of his abilities. All others were hoping for a German revolution, but did not like the idea of interference on the part of a foreign power.

50. When old prisoners accepted Nazi values as their own they usually did not admit it, but explained their behavior by means of rationalizations. For instance, prisoners collected scrap in the camp because Germany was low on raw materials. When I pointed out that they were thus helping the Nazis, they rationalized that through the saving of scrap Germany's working classes, too, became richer. When erecting buildings for the Gestapo, controversies started whether one should build well. New prisoners were for sabotaging, a majority of the old prisoners for building well. It seems that the majority of the old prisoners had realized that they could not continue to work for the Gestapo unless they could convince themselves that their work made some sense, so they had to convince themselves of this sense.

51. The satisfaction with which some old prisoners enjoyed the fact that, during the twice daily counting of the prisoners, they really had stood well at attention can be explained only by the fact that they had entirely accepted the values of the Gestapo as their own. Prisoners prided themselves of being as tough as the Gestapo members. This identification with their torturers went so far as copying their leisure-time activities. One of the games played by the guards was to find who could stand to be hit longest without uttering a complaint. This game was copied by the old prisoners, as though they had not been hit often and long enough without needing to repeat this experience as a game.

52. Often the Gestapo would enforce nonsensical rules, originating in the whims of one of the guards. They were usually forgotten as soon as formulated, but there were always some old prisoners who would continue to follow these rules and try to enforce them on others long after the

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after the Gestapo had forgotten about them. Once, for instance, a guard on inspecting the prisoners' apparel found that the shoes of some of them were dirty on the inside. He ordered all prisoners to wash their shoes inside and out with water and soap. The heavy shoes treated this way became hard as stone. The order was never repeated, and many prisoners did not even execute it when given. Nevertheless there were some old prisoners who not only continued to wash the inside of their shoes every day but cursed all others who did not do so as negligent and dirty. These prisoners firmly believed that the rules set down by the Gestapo were desirable standards of human behavior, at least in the camp situation.

53. Other problems in which most old prisoners made their peace with the values of the Gestapo included the race problem, although race discrimination had been alien to their scheme of values before they were brought into the camp. They accepted as true the claim that Germany needed more space ("Lebensraum"), but added "as long as there does not exist a world federation," they believed in the superiority of the German race. It should be emphasized that this was not the result of propaganda on the side of the Gestapo. The Gestapo made no such efforts and insisted in its statements that it was not interested in how the prisoners felt as long as they were full of fear of the Gestapo. Moreover, the Gestapo insisted that it would prevent them from expressing their feelings anyway.

54. Among the old prisoners one could observe other developments which indicated their desire to accept the Gestapo along lines which definitely could not originate in propaganda. It seems that, since they returned to a childlike attitude toward the Gestapo, they had a desire that at least some of those whom they accepted as all-powerful father-images should be just and kind. They divided their positive and negative feelings- strange as it may be that they should have positive feelings, they had them--toward the Gestapo in such way that all positive emotions were concentrated on a few officers who were rather high up in the hierarchy of camp administrators, but hardly ever on the governor of the camp. They insisted that these officers hide behind their rough surfaces a feeling of justice and propriety; he, or they, were supposed to be genuinely interested in the prisoners and even trying, in a small way, to help them. Since nothing of these supposed feelings and efforts ever became apparent, it was explained that he hid them so effectively because otherwise he would not be able to help the prisoners. The eagerness of

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these prisoners to find reasons for their claims was pitiful. A whole legend was woven around the fact that of two officers inspecting a barrack one had cleaned his shoes from mud before entering. He probably did it automatically, but it was interpreted as a rebuff to the other officer and a clear demonstration of how he felt about the concentration camp.

55. Conclusions. Based upon my knowledge of the Gestapo and my confinement in Dachau and Buchenwald for one year, which furnished the personal experience and laboratory for the foregoing observations, I have reached certain conclusions as to the Nazi reasons for setting up the concentration camps and the results which they sought to achieve by conducting such camps in the manner which I have described. The conclusions are as follows:

(a) To spread terror among the rest of the population by using the prisoners as hostages for good behavior, and by demonstrating what happens to those who oppose the Nazi rules.

(b) To provide the Gestapo members with a training ground in which they are so educated as to lose all human emotions and attitudes and learn the most effective ways of breaking resistance in a defenseless civilian population.

(c) To provide the Gestapo with an experimental laboratory in which to study the effective means for breaking civilian resistance, the minimum food, hygienic, and medical requirements needed to keep prisoners alive and able to perform hard labor when the threat of punishment takes the place of all other normal incentives, and the influence on performance if no time is allowed for anything but hard labor and if the prisoners are separated from their families.

(d) To break the prisoners as individuals and to change them into docile masses from which no indivdual or group act of resistance could arise.

56. Some additional comment on these conclusions is indicated. With respect to (a) above--the spreading of terror among the rest of the people--that objective does not appear to have been an original purpose of the concentration camp device. When the concentration camps were first established the Nazis detained in them their more prominent foes. Pretty soon there were no more prominent enemies available, because they were either dead, in the jails, the camps, or had emigrated. Still, an institution was needed to threaten the opponents of the system. Too many Germans became dissatisfied with the system. To imprison all of them would have interrupted the functioning of the industrial production, the

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upholding of which was a paramount goal of the Nazis. So if a group of the population got fed up with the Nazi regime, a selected few members of this group would be brought into the concentration camp. If lawyers became restless, a few hundred lawyers were sent to the camp, the same happened to physicians when the medical profession seemed rebellious, etc. The Gestapo called such group punishments "actions" and this new system was first used during the year 1937-38, when Germany was first preparing to embark on the annexation of foreign countries. During the first of these "actions" only the leaders of the opposition group were punished. That led to the feeling that just to belong to a rebellious group was not dangerous, since only the leaders were threatened. Soon the Gestapo revised its system and selected the persons to be punished so that they represented a cross-section through the different strata of the group. This new procedure had not only the advantage of spreading terror among all members of the group, but made it possible to punish and destroy the group without necessarily touching the leader if that was for some reason inopportune. Though prisoners were never told exactly why they were imprisoned, those imprisoned as representatives of a group came to know it. Prisoners were interviewed by the Gestapo to gain information about their relatives and friends. During these interviews prisoners sometimes complained that they were imprisoned while more prominent foes of the Nazis were at liberty. They were told that it was just their bad luck that they had to suffer as members of a group, but if their fate did not teach the group to behave better they would get a chance to meet them all in the camp.

57. Moreover, the Gestapo saw to it that the rest of the population learned of these "actions" through the newspapers. For purposes of intimidation not all news about the terror of the concentration camps was suppressed. Newspapers were permitted to reprint foreign reports on the concentration camps. The fact that the tortures were planned not only for breaking down the prisoners' ability to resist but also for intimidating the rest of the population was demonstrated at the beginning of my experience with the Gestapo. When boarding the train for Dachau the SS men butchered several prisoners on an exposed platform. Hundreds of spectators viewed this incident from the windows of adjacent houses.

58. I learned from fellow prisoners how they were used as hostages. They had learned from letters that their release had been promised to their relatives if both prisoner and relatives would behave better, would

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be more loyal Nazis. The release was again and again postponed with the explanation that some relative was not a "good" Nazi.

59. A further example of (b) above, namely, the concentration camp as a training ground for Gestapo members in which they are so educated as to lose all human emotions, was afforded by the studied arrogance of Gestapo personnel in the presence of prisoners. The Gestapo considered, or pretended to consider, the prisoners the scum of the earth. They insisted that none of them was any better than the others. One of the reasons for this attitude was probably to impress the young guards who received their training in the camp that they were superior to even the most outstanding prisoner and to demonstrate to them that the former foes of the Nazis were now subdued and not worthy of any special attention. If a formerly prominent prisoner had been treated better, the simple guard would have thought that he is still influential; if he had been treated worse, they might have thought that he is still dangerous. This was in line with the desire to impress the guards that even a slight degree of opposition against the Nazi system led to the destruction of the person who dared to oppose, and that the degree of opposition made no difference in this respect.

60. The fact that these young SS men were not only permitted but encouraged to use former secretaries of state, generals, university professors as their slaves tought them not only to disrespect superiority, but to become convinced of their being "supermen."

61. Tortures were, moreover, such common occurrences in the camp that they no longer evoked any reaction in the guards. To kick and whip prisoners became to them a nearly automatic response. If a prisoner passed a guard he expected to be hit or kicked, since this seemed to be the "conditioned" response of these fledgling "supermen." Finally their daily contact with the undernourished prisoners accustomed them to feel no pity with a starving population.

62. An example of the use of the camp as a laboratory for experimentation in minimum food requirements (conclusion c above) were the frequent changes in food rations. Bread rations were increased and decreased. On some days no food was distributed, on other days no food other than bread. This was particularly true in Buchenwald where the prisoners' weight was regularly checked.

63. To recapitulate, it is apparent that the concentration camp had an importance reaching far beyond its being a place where the Gestapo

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took revenge on its enemies. It was the main training ground for young Gestapo soldiers who were planning to rule and police Germany and all conquered nations; it was the Gestapo's laboratory where it developed methods for changing free and upright citizens not only into grumbling slaves, but into serfs who in many respects accepted their masters' values. The "old" prisoners still thought that they were following their own life goals and values, whereas in reality they accepted the Nazis' values as their own.

64. Moreover, what happened in an extreme fashion to the prisoners who spent several years in the concentration camp happened in less exaggerated form to the inhabitants of the big concentration camp which was formerly greater Germany. The system seemed too strong for an individual to break its hold over his emotional life, particularly if he found himself within a group which had more or less accepted the Nazi system. It seemed easier to resist the pressure of the Gestapo and the Nazis if one functioned as an individual; the Gestapo seemed to know that and therefore insisted on forcing all individuals into groups which they supervised. Some of the methods used for that purpose were the hostage system and the punishment of the whole group for whatever a member of it did; not permitting anybody to deviate in his behavior from the group norm, whatever this norm may be; discouraging solitary activities of any kind, etc. The main goal of the efforts seemed to be to produce in the subjects childlike attitudes and childlike dependency on the will of the leaders. Thus, it was very difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to resist the slow process of personality disintegration produced by the unrelenting pressure of the Gestapo and Nazi system.

65. Further elaboration of the data, statements, and conclusions contained herein is to be found in an article which I wrote for an American publication, the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology (1943, Vol. 38, pp. 417-452). An authentic copy of such Article is annexed hereto as Exhibit A and made a part of this affidavit.

Bruno Bettelheim

Bruno Bettelheim

Subscribed and sworn to before
me this the 10th day of July 1945.

Edward L. Davis

Notary Public
My Commission Expires July 14, 1946

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